Going through the Gospels – Bible Study Series

The Sermon on the Mount of Jesus Christ
(Article)

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."
Matthew 7:24 (BSB)

Introduction:

The above verse helps us understand Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, since it is at the heart of His teachings and ministry. Jesus points here directly to Himself as 'God in the Flesh' and sets the stage for us and everyone who will ever follow Him, to listen to His voice, put into practice His teachings and build His Kingdom, as the Holy Spirit transforms us and guides us. (1) While there are both similarities and differences to the so-called 'Sermon on the Plain' (Luke 6:20-49), this does in no way make the Sermon on the Mount inauthentic, since Jesus may have well repeated His message and teachings on different occasions. It is cohesive, well-structured and unified. (2) (3) With every word of Jesus here being authentic, we are called to read, listen to and heed what He is saying carefully, since as the sermon concludes, there are only two possible options of response - to accept, or reject Christ's message. (4) Keeping this in mind, the following is a 'walk-through' with Jesus through His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), and provides both interpretation and application for every segment of His teaching.

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them, saying:
Matthew 5:1–2 (BSB)

Interpretation:

This is the beginning of Jesus' well-known 'Sermon on the Mount,' so-called, because He is teaching here on a "mountain," (v.1) (i.e. a mountainside). The exact location of our Lord's teaching is unknown, and it is not helpful to try to attach any further symbolic significance here. (5) Similarly, there is no need to see this 'sermon' in any way as a contradiction to the so-called 'Sermon on the Plain' (Luke 6:20-49), since these may be separate sermons. (6) Christ's sitting down is a common way of Judaic teachers instructing others, and is a familiar position Jesus takes (see

Matthew 13:1-2; 15:39; 26:55). (7) The “crowds” (v.1) are people who listen and watch Jesus out of curiosity, and the “disciples” (Greek: ‘learners’) are people committed to Him, while later on, even many disciples leave Him (John 6:66). (8) What matters most is that all of Jesus’ words are authentic , and therefore, what He teaches is unique, based on His divine authority as ‘God in the Flesh,’ our Messiah.

Application:

We see here, even before Jesus speaks, a distinction between people. There are crowds of people surrounding Jesus at this event, and yet it is our Lord’s disciples who come to Him to hear Him teach. And as we know, later many ‘disciples’ turn away from Him, and only some remain committed to Jesus until the end, as witnesses to His crucifixion, death and resurrection. This is a harsh truth for all of us believers, that as Jesus’ followers, we are called to persevere in our walk of faith until the end. However, that is the whole point of our Lord’s sermon in which He encourages us and admonishes us to stand firm with Him, as He tells us about both blessings and persecutions for believers (Matthew 5:10-12) - an inevitable reality for us as Christians. (9) Yet, in the end, on Judgment Day, Jesus will set the record straight for all eternity.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.”
Matthew 5:3–12 (BSB)

Interpretation:

This sequence of Jesus’ statements is called the Beatitudes. The name “beatitudes” is derived from Latin “blessed, happy,” and summarizes the core teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. (10) The word for beatitudes as used here does not mean “happy,” but rather refers to God’s compensation

for those who follow Jesus to the end - amidst hardship, suffering and persecution, those who God will honor at the Last Judgment. (11) In these verses Jesus alludes to the Old Testament, and brings to mind both earthly and spiritual realities, culminating in v.12 where Jesus refers to the persecution of the prophets (especially Jeremiah). (12)

The “poor in spirit” (v.3) refers to all people who realize their complete helplessness of doing things solely in their own strength and trust in God as their one and only hope. “Those who mourn,” (v.4) are those who grieve over their own sins and those of others. In v.5 “the meek” who “will inherit the earth,” refers to all people who will ever come to Jesus and follow Him in dependence and humility. “Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (v.6) are those who long for God’s holiness in their own lives. Those who are merciful will receive God’s mercy (v.7), if not in this life, then certainly on Judgment Day. “The pure in heart” refers to those who have a personal and growing relationship with Christ, to be consummated in the life to come. The “peacemakers” (v.9) are people who strive after peace, as far as possible, that way manifesting the character of God. “Those who are persecuted because of righteousness,” (v.10) are those who by their righteous living may offend others - an important aspect of the Christian life, Jesus expands upon in v.11 - since being persecuted is not only part of following Jesus, but can be found throughout the Bible (i.e. persecution of the prophets in v.12). (13)

Application:

The beatitudes are at the very heart of Jesus’ teaching. As believers, we have to remind ourselves that while we can already experience these blessings in the here and now, through the person and power of the Holy Spirit, it is crucial to be aware that the complete manifestation of these blessings is in the age to come. (14) This holds true for the first beatitude (“poor in spirit” in v.3), since we realize our inadequacy before a holy God, and yet through Jesus Christ, we have our satisfaction and sufficiency in God. (15) Just as Jesus is humble and lowly, so are we as Christians.

The second beatitude continues along the lines of imitating Christ (“those who mourn” in v.4), as Jesus demonstrates what it is like to grieve and mourn (John 11:35). Our God also understands that since we are His followers we also mourn, as a result of persecution, due to the temporal prominence of wickedness in this world. (16)

In the third beatitude (“blessed are the meek,” v.5) we see another of Jesus’ personality traits expressed. We are to have the desire to put other people first before our own interests. (17)

The fourth beatitude (“hunger and thirst for righteousness,” v.6) is a call for all believers to have a passion to do what is right in God’s sight. This is truly not always easy, and yet we are to seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness. Anything interfering or standing in the way of this *must* be set aside. (18)

In the fifth beatitude (“blessed are the merciful,” v.7), we understand that being merciful is not optional, but a must. Without Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross, due to God’s mercy, we have new life through Jesus, which is our rebirth (having crucified our old sin-self with our Lord, and being raised up to ‘new life’ by His resurrection). It is only because of Christ’s mercy and grace towards us, that we can live at all. (19)

The sixth beatitude (“the pure in heart” in v.8) is a call for us as Christians to humble ourselves in repentance and obedience to Christ, that is to have a “pure heart.” A sincere devotion to Christ will always express itself in letting go of evil, deceit and malice, and thereby ‘seeing God’ with eyes of faith. (20)

In the seventh beatitude (“blessed are the peacemakers,” in v.9) we are reminded of the greatest peacemaker ever, namely our Lord Jesus Christ, the ‘Prince of Peace.’ Thereby “sons of God,” refers to our character, rather than to a position of prominence. (21) There is virtually no limit, as to how this can be practically expressed in our lives (Notice our Lord’s first words to His disciples after His resurrection in John 20:19 - “Peace be with you…”).

The sober reality we have to deal with as believers is exposed in the eighth beatitude (“blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,” in v.10), since we realize that persecution as believers is part of our walk of faith with Christ (see Romans 8:35-37; Hebrews 11:35-40). Persecution can come from people outside of believing communities, and from within believing communities, i.e. the church (see Matthew 7:15-23).

The call to persevere, for all of us as believers is in view here, as we live in this fallen evil world, and yet Jesus promises that our reward for our righteousness is the kingdom of heaven (living with Jesus in all eternity). (22) This is so important, that Jesus expands upon persecution in v.11-12, providing more details for us, so that we are better prepared.

To sum it up, the Christian life is not by default one of health and wealth, but rather a thorny, hard-edged walk, that calls us to stay close to our God as best as we can. Yet even though we face persecution - in the end - we are and will be truly blessed, since ours is the kingdom of heaven. (23)

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savor, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”
Matthew 5:13–16 (BSB)

Interpretation:

Here, Jesus teaches about the witness of believers. He uses two illustrations (“salt of the earth,” in v.13 and “light of the world,” in v.14) to make this point. The first illustration is taken from the ancient world, with salt being used as a preservative for food. Jesus indirectly links His followers to salt, which purpose is to prevent deterioration, and so both the salt and Jesus’ followers are not to deteriorate. (24) The second illustration Jesus uses (“light”), is a way of revealing the way to go by means of illumination. The point is that Jesus’ followers are to be models of discipleship within a fallen world, which is specifically the result of a person’s behaviour (which is not a contradiction to Matthew 6:1-4, where Jesus is talking about a person’s purpose, that is, what motivates a person’s heart to do something). (25) As such, being “salt” and “light” is not what people are to become, but actually - as Christ’s witnesses - who believers are. (26)

Application:

The application for Christians in this passage is that we learn about the Christ-like character and actions we are to display in a fallen world. This is our vocation, our calling as believers, and as we build God’s kingdom, we can expect opposition and even persecution. (27) In our witness as Christians led by the Holy Spirit, we are to have a positive influence on others, which can apply to many different situations, such as where we live and where we work, for example. (28)

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For I tell you truly, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single jot, not a stroke of a pen, will disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. So then, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do likewise will be called

least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever practices and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 5:17–20 (BSB)

Interpretation:

These verses are among the most challenging in the Bible. (29) The reason for this is the complexity and debate surrounding the interpretive traditions here. (30) Thus, we need to find out more about the context Jesus is talking about here. As such, when Jesus talks about not abolishing the law, but fulfilling it, we have to understand that He is bringing about the age of salvation, along with completing what is prophesied in the law and the Old Testament in and through Himself. (31) The two things we are considering here are interpreting these verses (What do they mean?) and how to apply them (What do they mean for me as a Christian?).

So, let us investigate this text and its meaning verse-by-verse. In verse 17, we are looking at what Jesus means by "the law or the prophets," and "to fulfill them." When our Lord refers to 'the law or the Prophets,' He is referring to the entire Old Testament. (32) Also, in reference to 'fulfillment' Jesus is talking about bringing to fruition the law and the Prophets in and through Himself. As such, we see this after His resurrection, appearing to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, conducting the first 'Bible Study' in the New Testament, discussing how the law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms point to Himself. (33)

In verse 18, "until heaven and earth pass away," refers to the 'end of the age,' that is Christ's Second Coming. (39) In the same verse, Jesus' words "…not a single jot, not a stroke of a pen, will disappear from the law until everything is accomplished," deals with all predicted events about Himself coming to pass, which is emphasized by the word "everything," indicating God's fully divine purpose. (35)

In verse 19 then, Jesus admonishes us not to tamper with God's Word, but to protect ourselves from such 'tampering' by not nullifying 'these commandments' (which means those commandments fulfilled and even re-interpreted by Jesus). (36) The reference to "least" and "great" in the kingdom of heaven reveals apparent different gradations of eternal reward, of which the Bible does not tell us anything more than this (other than 1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

In verse 20 Jesus exposes the 'righteousness' of the "scribes and Pharisees," as self-righteousness, and therefore not being righteous at all,

since they were not in it for God, but only for themselves, as ‘people-pleasers.’

Application:

What stands out here is that Christ not only ‘fulfills’ the law, but demonstrates His ultimate authority over it, having a unique divine knowledge of God’s will, which is expressed in how Jesus interprets and applies the law. (37) Following Jesus’ lead, and His absolute authority over everything, we do well to take Him at His Word here - that means, we are to obey His commandments. For example, the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament (Exodus 20:1-17); Deuteronomy 20:1-17) of which the first four deal with having a right relationship with God, and of which the last six deal with having a right relationship with other people, are just as valid today, as they were then. (38)

In the subsequent parts we learn more about Jesus ‘fine-tuning’ some of the Laws that the religious leaders at the time had distorted. He also ‘narrows’ and ‘broadens’ some parts of the law, putting it into proper perspective.

“You have heard that it was said to the ancients, ‘Do not murder’ and ‘Anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to the fire of hell. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,

leave your gift there before the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Reconcile quickly with your adversary, while you are still on the way to court. Otherwise, he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."
Matthew 5:21–26 (BSB)

Interpretation:

This passage is part of the so-called 'antithesis' segment that constitute the remainder of Matthew 5. Here we find six antithesis that all start with some kind or other form of "You have heard that is was said…but I tell you." (39) In verses 21 and 22 we see Jesus expanding (escalating)) the sixth commandment (Exodus 20:13) to a prohibition of anger. The term 'Raca' is an abusive Aramaic word, subjecting a person to liability before the highest Jewish court, the Sanhedrin. Even worse is calling a person a 'fool,' subjecting a person to "the fire of hell" (Greek translation of 'Gehenna' - referring to a Jerusalem garbage dump where trash was burned - this is another way of referring to "the fire of hell"). (40)

In verse 23-26 we encounter a command to reconciliation, which Jesus illustrates in two examples: One, the command to be reconciled before engaging in worship service ('leaving your gift before the altar'). Two, the command to settle swiftly with an adversary before going to court, since a person may end up in debtor's prison, with no opportunity to earn money, in order to get out. (41) Jesus is intensifying the original Old Testament command here, so that the original divine intention is revealed. (42)

Application:

What Jesus shows here is that human anger can easily escalate into something more severe, turning into violence, even murder. By expanding the Old Testament commandment, Jesus forbids anger. (43) Thus, we as believers today are also called to avoid being hateful and using abusive language. Similarly, as far as it is in our ability, we are to proactively reconcile with adversaries, even before going to court. (44)

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman to lust after her has already

committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to depart into hell."
Matthew 5:27–30 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In this passage Jesus clarifies the seventh of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:14) and teaches about inner purity in verses 29 to 30. He reveals that the Old Testament command not to commit adultery originates in the lust of the heart and that way already constitutes a violation of the Old Testament command. (45)

Our Lord drives home the point how the law is linked to the impulse and willingness to sin, by using a form of exaggeration ('hyperbole') relating to the 'right eye' and the 'right hand.' (46) While in no way diminishing the seriousness of sin, Christ warns of the consequences of sin, that is to end in eternal hell.

Application:

How does this apply to Christians? Jesus shows us how lust begins in the heart and thereby already is a form of adultery. In His teaching, avoiding adultery is insufficient. (47) As believers, we are to deal with sin in a radical way, that is not to feed our imagination with sinful thoughts, but to take our thoughts captive (2 Corinthians 10:5). Jesus helps us understand the deeper spiritual reality behind lust, adultery and how they relate to sin. (48)

“It has also been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, brings adultery upon her. And he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”
Matthew 5:31–32 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In this passage Jesus is finetuning the proper application of the Old Testament Mosaic Law concerning divorce and remarriage (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). What people were taught in Jesus’ day is that a husband could divorce his wife, even for such trivial matters as accidently serving him burned food. However, the original application and reason as grounds for divorce, was and is adultery. (49) Christ clarifies that divorce due to adultery is permitted, yet *not* mandatory, since God detests divorce (Malachi 2:16) and never intended it to be so in the first place (Matthew 19:5-6). (50) Thus, Jesus is ‘tightening’ the Old Testament law, since he includes unlawful remarriage in his teaching, thereby establishing a double restriction. (51)

Application:

Following Jesus here, we learn that marriage is holy to God, who intends it to be between one man married to one woman (Matthew 19:3-12). Divorce is less than ideal, and should not be taken lightly. Other than for sexual infidelity divorce is not permissible for Jesus, and this should encourage us as believers to reconcile as top priority instead of seeking divorce. (52) Note, that what Jesus is relating to us here refers, primarily, to marriage between two believers, which is affirmed in another part of the Bible, by the Apostle Paul:

To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not
separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or
else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.
1 Corinthians 7:10–11 (BSB)

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the ancients, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill your vows to the Lord.’ But I tell you not to swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor should you swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ Anything more comes from the evil one.”
Matthew 5:33–37 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In this passage we see a clarification of the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:12) in the sense that Jesus is calling out the Pharisees avoiding accountability by swearing by something other than God Himself. The examples in verses 34-35, expose the faulty practice of the religious leaders of the time, since Jesus insists that even lesser things always relate to God. When Jesus says “not to swear at all,” this prohibition does not overturn the Old Testament command, but is a way of pointing to the requirement of truthfulness before God, hence Christ’s admonishment to let a person’s ‘yes’ be ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’, ‘no.’ (53) Thus, in using exaggerated language (‘hyperbole’) Christ does not prohibit all oath-taking, but is correcting a misconception of the Old Testament - pointing to the importance of being trustful in speech, instead of inventing schemes designed to circumvent a promise made. (54)

Application:

For us as Christians this means to be truthful at all times. While Jesus condemns false oath-taking, we realize the need for us as believers to be people of integrity. (55) Taking these verses absolutely literally is going beyond the responsible interpretation of this passage. As such, believers in the early church still took oaths, as the Bible reveals to us (Romans 11:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:5, 10). (56)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. If someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also; if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well; and if someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”
Matthew 5:38–42 (BSB)

Interpretation:

Here, we find Jesus clarifying the meaning of Old Testament law in the context of His contemporaries (The whole passage in view here is v.38-48). The first part (v.38-42) helps us understand the meaning of personal abuse and personal self-sacrifice. (57) When Jesus says “not to resist an evil person,” he *does not mean* that we tolerate evil without using common sense and seeking God’s guidance in prayer and the Holy Spirit prompting us. Christ means here that there may be instances where we find ourselves in uncalled for situations, in which we are confronted with evil. Using the slap on the cheek example (a form of insult in Jesus’ time) believers are called not to retaliate in this specific situation.

This non-retaliating disposition of heart is then again applied to the abandonment of ‘rights’ in order to achieve a higher purpose, in this case, to avoid a lawsuit. Going two miles instead of one is another form of witnessing for Christ, illustrated here by Roman soldiers in Jesus’ time legally enlisting a civilian to carry their luggage for a given distance. The last part of this passage is an example of joyful giving to others in need. (58)

Application:

The practical application of Jesus’ words here, requires us to understand that these are not absolutes to be separated from their historical context. So, “turning the other cheek” does not mean we are ‘doormats’ to be abused at all times, but a warning that we may sometimes face unforeseen evil at times, especially as Christians. The other examples

primarily reveal a non-retaliatory heart (avoiding insults, attempting to settle outside of courts) and a generous heart (giving freely to those in need). However, these are not ‘one-size-fits-all’ commands, but require believers to apply them ethically according to circumstances as they change. (59)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor’ and ‘Hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
Matthew 5:43–48 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In this second part of the passage, Jesus is correcting false teaching, since in v.43 “Hate your enemy” is not found in Old Testament Scripture, but only the first part “Love your neighbor” in Leviticus 19:18. (60) Jesus’ command here reveals not only the reality of persecution for His followers, but also shows Christ’s love expressed in believer’s hearts, as we are called to love our enemies and pray for our persecutors (v.44). Heeding this command of our God is imperative, since that way we are sons of our Father in heaven. We thereby reflect the character of God, that is Jesus Christ. (61) The command to be perfect (v.48) closes this section, and points back to Christ Himself as fulfillment of the law.

Application:

As we apply these commands of Jesus to our lives, we realize, especially in light of the last verse (v.48), that we are unable to do so, in our own strength, apart from Jesus. Even if people hate us (as believers) this

does not mean we have to hate them, but are to manifest love and kindness toward them. (62) Our Lord teaches us that loving God and loving our neighbor cannot be separated (Mark 12:29-31). *How* this is done specifically, may manifest itself differently, depending on the circumstances, yet that it *must* be done is not optional. Thus, as Jesus proclaims the demands of the kingdom of God, we as Christians are called to an unconditional commitment (63) - to say it in Jesus's Words:

> *"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*
> Matthew 5:48 (BSB)

"Be careful not to perform your righteous acts before men to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. Truly I tell you, they already have their full reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."
Matthew 6:1–4 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In these verses, Christ explains what genuine religious practices are, in God's sight. Along with keeping the law the religious leaders in Jesus' time, considered giving (Matthew 6:2-4), to pray (6:5-15) and to fast (6:16-18) as most important evidence of piety. However, as seen here, in giving to the needy, and the other passages about praying and fasting, Jesus warns about people doing these practices for the wrong reason, that is to gain human recognition. (64) In verse 2 Jesus illustrates such wrong motives, such as "sounding a trumpet," that is to draw attention to themselves. In verse 3 he continues His warning by commanding "do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing," in other words, not to give in order to receive human recognition, but to give in secret, and in that way doing what is acceptable in God's sight (v.4). (65)

Application:

From God's perspective, *that* we give is not as important as to *why* we give. Jesus makes it clear here, that giving for the sake of giving does not earn us any merit before God. Such motivation is a form of idolatry, and detestable to God. Rather, God who sees every person's heart, rewards those who are truly in it for Him and Him only:

> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or height, for I have rejected him; the LORD does not see as man does. For man sees the outward appearance, but the LORD sees the heart."
> 1 Samuel 16:7 (BSB)

Jesus warns us and encourages us about what truly motivates the human heart. (66)

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. Truly I tell you, they already have their full reward. But when you pray, go into your inner room, shut your door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not babble on like pagans, for they think that by their many words they will be heard. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."
Matthew 6:5–8 (BSB)

Interpretation:

Here Jesus continues to warn about religious hypocrisy, in this case as it relates to false motives when it comes to prayer. Public prayer in Jesus' time was not uncommon be it in a synagogue or outside. (67) The point is not that Jesus prohibits all prayer (v.5), but reveals that a person's heart should be bent toward God only. That is why Jesus uses the example of private prayer (v.6) to illustrate that a person should be more inclined to pray

alone before God, instead of seeking public acclaim, thereby displaying a false piety. (68)

In verse 7 Jesus further clarifies the way people should pray, using pagan rituals as an example of *how not* to pray (falsely assuming that repeating many words accomplishes something). In verse 8 He shows us why we are not to follow the pagan example, since God already "knows what you need before you ask Him."

Application:

Jesus makes it clear that prayer is not to be part of pretentious piety, but rather is part of a genuine relationship with God. Since God already knows what we need before we even ask Him, we are to come to Him with a humble, repentant heart, full of gratitude. This disposition of heart is the only acceptable way to God, and Jesus helps us with this further in revealing how to pray in the 'Lord's prayer' (Matthew 6:9-13)

"So then, this is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"
Matthew 6:9–13 (BSB)

Interpretation:

This prayer is usually known as "the Lord's Prayer," and in it Jesus tells us what our priorities should be in prayer. As such, verse 9-10 deals with God and His sovereignty, verse 11-13 deals with people (our physical needs, the need for forgiveness, and protection from Satan and all evil). (69)

The first petition in v.9 is a call for reverence before God, considering His holiness, and thereby acknowledging Jesus (God the Son) as our Lord and Savior, as well as God (God, the Father). The second and third petition in v.10 refer to God's sovereign reign, which is already in place, but is still awaiting its future consummation in all its followers.

The fourth petition in v.11 relates to a common day labourer in Jesus' time who reserved his wages at the end of the day to buy food. Similarly, we are called to trust Jesus to provide for our daily needs. The fifth petition in v.12, the need to be forgiven (as believers) and the need to forgive others is so important that Jesus picks up on this again in v.14-15:

> ***"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours."***
> Matthew 6:14–15 (BSB)

The last petition in v.13 does not mean that God is tempting us, but that we call upon Him to help us avoid temptations (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). Also, the call for delivering from "the evil one" (Satan) and all evil, in an acknowledgement of God's power and calling out to our Lord Jesus Christ to protect us, since He is the only one who can do so, and did (see Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). (70)

Application:

In this prayer, we learn that honoring God's name and keeping it hallowed is the most important thing in the life of a believer. (71) Relying and trusting Him to provide for our daily needs is just as important for us, as is forgiving others, which is not optional, but a must.

The prayer is a model for us to follow as Christians, but not to be used in a repetitive, mechanical way, since it then becomes meaningless. (72) Rather, it should be part of the prayer life of believers, whose hear is truly bent towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note: The name for the Lord's Prayer is derived from the Latin 'Pater Noster' for the initial words of the prayer "Our Father." The ancient manuscripts of the Bible do not contain the popular doxology at the end of v.13 "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." (73)

“When you fast, do not be somber like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they already have their full reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that your fasting will not be obvious to men, but only to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”
Matthew 6:16–18 (BSB)

Interpretation:

Jesus instructs people about proper fasting. He condemns the abuse of ‘hypocritical’ fasting (v.6) for those who are not in it for God, but to gain public approval only. Our Lord does not prohibit all fasting, but reveals what motivates truly godly people, to act in a God-pleasing way (v.17-18). In general ‘fasting’ refers to refraining from food longer than usual. (74)

Application:

The practical application for us as believers is that we do well to follow Christ’s instructions here about fasting. Fasting does not have to be solely related to food, but may be done by foregoing some other kind of earthly activity (such as entertainment, culture and the Internet). The goal is to spend quality time with Jesus in Word and prayer and grow in our personal relationship with Him.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
Matthew 6:19–21 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In this passage Jesus warns against idolatry, as He says “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,” (v.19) which is an ongoing process that has to be stopped, since it is a form of idolatry, and thus evil. (75) To guard against this, our Lord calls us to store up “treasures in heaven,” (v20) which reveals the intensions of a person’s heart truly bent towards Jesus.

Application:

At stake here is not how much a person owns, but what that person does, or not do with their earthly possessions. (76) So, a person whose heart’s desire is to serve Christ, will not only be a good steward of what they own, but also share with others, who may be in need of even the basic necessities of life (lacking food, water, shelter and clothing). That way, a person can guard against the love of money which is in itself a form of evil, and unbecoming of a Christian (1 Timothy 6:10).

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters: Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”
Matthew 6:22–24 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In this segment, Jesus expands upon His previous teaching (Matthew 6:19-21) warning against the idolatry inherent in the love of materialism and, here, money (v.24). Our Lord reveals the deeper spiritual reality behind such idolatry. There is a contrast here between ‘good’ eyes (generosity) (v.22) and ‘bad’ eyes (stinginess) (v.23) - the latter disposition of heart, exemplifying a self-deception, running so deep, a person may even think they are acceptable to God, but in reality getting it completely wrong from God’s view point, in other words are spiritually separated from God (v.24). (77)

Application:

The practical application for this passage is a stern and firm warning to all who place their desires and hope fully on earthly things (material objects and money). The only thing that matters to Jesus is a heart that is

solely bent toward Him, that is to be “full of light” (v.22), since the only other alternative is to be “full of darkness,” (78) which already indicates a person who is not ‘in it’ for Christ, but only for the temporary (engaging in idolatry) which in the end - if unrepentant - leads to eternal separation from God (in Hell).

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air: They do not sow or reap or gather into barns—and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? Consider how the lilies of the field grow: They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was adorned like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles strive after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Today has enough trouble of its own.”
Matthew 6:25–34 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In this last passage in Matthew 6 can be separated into four parts (v.25-27; 28-30; 31-33; 34). At the beginning of every part, Jesus presents the unifying theme of this passage, ‘Do not worry.’

The first part (v.25-27) our Lord *does not* tell us not to plan ahead, or to be lazy, but rather not to fret about life’s basic necessities (food and clothing). The most important aspect here is that Jesus is helping us grow in our walk of faith with God, who not only looks after His own creation (“birds of the air”) but also and especially looks after people (made in His image - ‘Imago Dei’). (79)

In the second part, Jesus encourages all His followers to have faith in Him, as he uses another example from nature (“lilies of the field” in v.28) to

show that God cares even more about providing clothing for us (a basic necessity). The point is that unbelief is the root of anxiety. (80)

In the third part, Jesus expands upon the first two parts by revealing the underlying spiritual reality of worrying about food, drink and clothing, namely that not trusting God for all of this is not only displeasing to God, but at core is essentially pagan. (81)

This then culminates in the fourth and last part, where Jesus acknowledges that every day has some worries that are unavoidable (v.34), but He calls us to embrace God's grace to provide for us daily and see us through the daily challenges we face, without fretting about tomorrow. (82)

Application:

The practical application of these four parts is that Jesus not only commands u not to worry, but also encourages us to trust God in faith. Trusting God in every area of life also reveals that we require and acknowledge God's providence (His divine activity and care for His creation). (83)

Our aim as believers is to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," (Matthew 6:33), which should lead us to share with those fellow Christians who are in need, and also to depend on God for our own needs, instead of fretting about the future. (84) To say it differently:

> Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.
>
> Proverbs 3:5–6 (BSB)

“Do not judge, or you will be judged. For with the same judgment you pronounce, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but fail to notice the beam in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while there is still a beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! First take the beam out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. Do not give dogs what is holy; do not throw your pearls before swine. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.”

Matthew 7:1–6 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In this passage Jesus commands believers not to be judgmental (v.1-2), to be soberly self-discerning (v.3-5) and warns about the need for spiritual discernment about social behaviour in their relationships with other people (v.6). (85) Jesus admonishes us to exercise forgiveness first and foremost, and being aware of our own faults first (“beam in your own eye” in v.3). Only then, with a humble and gentle heart can we even consider helping another person (“then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” in v.5). However, we must be as Christ instructs us, to be spiritually discerning (v.6), because another person may not embrace the gospel message (“dogs” and “swine”), but reject it and turn against us as believers. (86)

Application:

Jesus’ teaching here about judging others, is first and foremost warning us as Christians not to be prideful and to practice hypocrisy of judgment of others, without first addressing our own sinfulness and propensity toward unforgiveness. This does not mean to be undiscerning about ungodly doctrine or carelessly excusing other people’s evil deeds and actions (see Matthew 6:15-19). It does mean, however, that as believers in a given Christian community, we are to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us discern good from evil. (87) Our relationship with others do and should matter to us, and should be characterized by godly behaviour (towards ourselves and others). A fellow Christian should bring us closer to God, bring us closer to others, and help us grow in our personal relationship with God. (88)

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? So if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! In everything, then, do to others as you would have them do to you. For this is the essence of the Law and the Prophets.”
Matthew 7:7–12 (BSB)

Interpretation:

Here we see our Lord instructing us about prayer (v.7-8 and 9-11) and the so-called ‘Golden Rule’ (v.12). In the first part about prayer (v.7-8) Jesus reveals to us what our attitude should be as we pray - that to engage in prayer in the first place (“ask”), with a sincere heart (“seek”) and being diligent (“knock”). (89) This is primarily a call to be persistent in our prayers (v.8). In the second part, dealing with prayer (v.9-11) Jesus points out that in our broken human nature (“evil” in v.11, since all of us are born sinners) people usually do not give their children fake or look-alike gifts they request. Prayerfully asking our “Father in heaven” (v.11) then, is done with an expectancy that God will provide only His very best for His children (which, in His divine love (‘agape’), does not mean that God gives us everything we ask for), since God is purely good (all-knowing, all-loving and unchanging). (90)

The ‘Golden Rule’ which is known in other religions in its negative form, is here uniquely given by Jesus in the *positive*. In pointing back to Himself, as fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 5:17) our Lord re-affirms the requirements of God’s kingdom. (91)

Application:

The first two parts about prayer, help us as believers to understand the importance of praying in the first place (since some people don’t pray) and doing so with the right motives and attitude. The life of a Christian should be

one of prayer and expectant persistence (see Matthew 6:5-14). The ‘Golden Rule’ then calls us to ‘love our neighbor’ (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39) and is not simply a catchphrase or slogan, but at the core of the Christian faith. A true follower of Jesus, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, will not only listen to Christ’s words here, putting them into action, but will diligently apply them to their own lives. It is here that our union with Christ becomes part of our effective witness to others. (92)

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it.”
Matthew 7:13–14 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In this segment, Jesus reveals the most critical aspect of the Sermon on the Mount, namely the admonishment to “enter through the narrow gate,” (v.13) the “narrow gate” being Christ Himself. This sets up the conclusion (Matthew 7:13-27) to Jesus’ sermon, in which he uses three analogies to explain two possible responses to His gospel message (narrow or broad; good or bad; building on rock or on sand). “Narrow” implies a path that comes with persecution and hardship, whereas “wide” implies the seemingly ‘right’ way to go, since many ‘worldly’ people chose it, but in the end it leads to “destruction” (i.e. eternal damnation in hell). (93)

Application:

The application here is crucial to Christians and non-Christians, since heeding Jesus’ words has eternal ramifications (heaven or hell). Since Jesus is the “narrow gate” there is no other way to enter heaven, apart from Him (John 14:6; 15:5). Christ’s work on the cross, His death and His resurrection are each events that occurred *only once* in human history. Therefore, the choice of entering God’s kingdom is one by faith in Jesus Christ and Him only. There is no other way. The choice a person makes is either spending eternity with Jesus in heaven, or spending eternity - in hell, separated from Jesus (John 3:16-21). (94) While not necessarily popular, Jesus is the *only* way!

“Beware of false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, by their fruit you will recognize them.”
Matthew 7:15–20 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In this segment Jesus warns about false prophets in how they appear on the outside (v.15) and how they can be identified as false (v.16-20). False prophets also appear in other parts of the Bible, e.g. Jeremiah 23:9-14; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; Titus 1:10-16. A prophet is basically a person who speaks on behalf of God. “False prophets” (v.15) say that they speak on God’s behalf, when in fact, they do not. They appear a certain way (“sheep’s clothing”) but are evil inside (“ravenous wolves”) and cause destruction amongst God’s people by their teaching and their behaviours. (95) Christ tells us that these false teachers can be recognized by their “fruit” (v.16-20) that is their teaching and/or behaviour. Bible-based and Christ-centred doctrine matters just as much as the fact that God’s people, including teachers, must have a personal relationship with Jesus. (96)

Application:

This teaching of Jesus about “false prophets” is just as important for us today, as it was then, since there are people who distort God’s truth, and teach others simply what they would like to hear (‘ear-ticklers’). This is why every Christian is called to stay close to God in Word (the Bible) and prayer.

How else is anyone able to identify, that what is being taught is true? (see Acts 17:10-12).

While not without challenges, there are two ways help in identifying false prophets: One, a false prophet can be recognized by their attitude towards God's people. Two, a false prophet can be recognized by what they teach. In the former case, such a person uses the "church" (the community of believers) to promote their own self-interest, possibly only for their own financial gain (see 3 John 9-10). In the latter case, the fruit of their teaching does not result in bringing others closer to Christ, i.e. people becoming more Christ-like. In its most destructive manifestation, the two ways of false teachers, culminate in a type of exclusivism in which other church members are mocked or marginalized. This does not reveal the open-heartedness of our Lord Jesus Christ and is part of our Lord's warning. (97)

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness!'"
Matthew 7:21–23 (BSB)

Interpretation:

Similar to the foregoing text dealing with false teachers, this passage deals with false disciples. In v.21 Jesus clearly states that there will be those who will not enter the kingdom of heaven, simply by having used His name ("Lord, Lord"), but *not* having done God's will. Our Lord expands on this in v.22 ("that day" refers to Judgment Day) where he calls out those whose hearts are not truly bent towards Him. Jesus' rebuke (v.23) is a stern warning against those who claim to be His followers, but really are not. As Christ reveals, the big difference between those who enter the kingdom and those who do not is being obedient to do God's will (v.19). (98)

Application:

The application of this passage for us as Christians is that, there are people who claim to be Christians, but in reality are not. They may appear

pious, religious or even do ‘good deeds,’ but their hearts are not in it for Christ, i.e. they are unregenerate. This is both a warning and rebuke of Jesus that should help us as believers to understand that there will be ‘bad apples’ among us this side of heaven. On Judgment Day, though, Jesus will set the record straight, once and for all: This is the final eschatological reality that all people will face, standing before Jesus Christ. (99) This important final truth is again made clear by Jesus:

> ***“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?’ And the King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.’ Then He will say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ And they too will reply, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then the King will answer, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.’ And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”***
>
> Matthew 25:31–46 (BSB)

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because its foundation was on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its collapse!”
Matthew 7:24–27 (BSB)

Interpretation:

Here, Jesus (similar to His admonition of entering through the “narrow gate” in Matthew 7:13-14) calls for a decision, by using a contrast (wise builder versus foolish builder). The wise builder hear Christ’s words, takes them to heart and acts upon them using godly wisdom (v.24-25). The foolish builder also hears Christ’s words, *does not* take them to heart and acts without godly wisdom (“building on sand” in v. 26, without a solid foundation) which ultimately leads to destruction (v.26-27). As a symbolic representation the “rock” (v.24, 25) can be seen as connected to Christ’s words “these words of mine.” (100) Thus, following Christ stands or falls on hearing His words and acting upon them, which is the difference between heaven and hell.

Application:

As the Sermon on the Mount comes to a conclusion here, Jesus does not mince any words and firmly warns about the eternal consequences of heaven and hell. Since Jesus speaks more about hell than heaven in His teachings, we become aware of the stark reality of both. Jesus’ teaching is designed to divide people into two groups, namely those who recognize who He is (‘God in the Flesh’) and follow Him, and those who do not recognize Him and reject Him. There is no middle ground here. The point of Jesus’ concluding teaching and illustration is that those who hear His words, and put them into practice, are His true followers. This does not mean doing apparent ‘good deeds’ in order to earn our salvation, but rather that a believer will act on Christ’s Words, as a result of a repentant heart, truly bent toward Him (see James 1:22-27; 2:14-16). Those are all of us believers, the ‘wise builders.’ (101)

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.
Matthew 7:26–29 (BSB)

Interpretation:

In this passage, ending the Sermon on the Mount, we learn about Jesus' authority. As Jesus stops speaking, we get a glimpse of the authority of our Lord's Words, manifested in how the crowds respond (v.28), being "astonished at His teachings." The reason for this is found in v.29, because Jesus' teaching is not only different than that of the "scribes," but also a teaching of true authority. Unlike Jesus, the "scribes," (i.e. the teachers of religious law) had a certain authority in the sight of men, since they used Scripture or quotations from other rabbis to support their own viewpoints. While Jesus does quote Scripture on rare occasions, He does not speak on the authority of others. (102) (103) This points to Jesus' absolute divinity, since he often quotes the Old Testament in order to offer His own authoritative re-interpretation. (104)

Application:

As Christians, when we read the Sermon on the Mount, carefully and prayerfully, guided by the Holy Spirit, we are just as astounded or amazed at our Lord's authority. There are so many different aspects about this sermon which are absolutely unique in the history of mankind, and as believers we do well to reflect upon our Lord's teaching as they instruct us, challenge us, admonish us and encourage us. Christ's teaching continues God's wisdom, grace and His authority, pointing us to Himself and His atoning work on the cross to save us. (105) As such, Jesus' teaching and His words are not only authoritative, but reveal to us the deficiencies of our heart, our being and our lives that can only find their fulfillment in truly following Christ and Him alone:

> ***"Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment. Indeed, he has crossed over from death to life."***
> John 5:24 (BSB)

Conclusion:

To sum up, we realize that Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is more than just a man-made teaching, but actually reveals the divine nature and purpose of God's Word as it is expressed in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. This sermon helps us understand who Jesus is (as 'God in the Flesh') and the grace He provides for us. (106)

As seen, we learn not only about practical ways of living life as Christians in a fallen world, such as ethical behaviour, 'dealing' with persecution and hardship, but also how to honor and glorify God with our lives. As such, most of what Jesus teaches us applies to all Christians in all situations of life, unless the Bible specifically sets forth limitations. (107)

There are certain things, such as 'fulfilling the law and the prophets' (Matthew 5:17-20), only Jesus can do, since He is the Messiah. Likewise, only Jesus is the one who can truly interpret Old Testament law, fulfill its purpose and instruct us best, thereby demonstrating His unique authority and inaugurating God's kingdom. (108)

What we can and must do as Christ's followers is recognize our inability, insufficiency, and helplessness (if we attempt to do things in our own strength, apart from our Lord - see John 15:5) to serve our mighty and holy Heavenly Father, who call us to:

> ***"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."***
>
> Matthew 5:48 (BSB)

This awareness of inadequacy keeps us repentant, humble, and surrendered to Jesus (as seen in the Beatitudes - Matthew 5:3-12) realizing that all of us fall short of living up to Christ's ethical ideal. (109) However, once we have fully surrendered to and embraced Christ, and let Him work in and through us through the Person and Power of the Holy Spirit, we let Him take care of our needs (food, water, shelter, clothing) and let Him guide us how to share the gospel with others. (110)

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Jesus' Sermon on the Mount
(Outline)

Matthew - Chapter 5

- The Sermon on the Mount (v.1-2)
- Beatitudes (v.3-10, 11-12)
- Salt and Light (v.13-16)
- The Fulfilment of the Law (v.17-20)
- Anger and Reconciliation (v.21-26)
- Adultery (v.27-30)
- Divorce (v.31-32)
- Oaths and Vows (v.33-37)
- Love Your Enemies (v.38-48)

Matthew - Chapter 6

- Giving to the Needy (v.1-4)
- The Lord's Prayer (v.5-15)
- Proper Fasting (v.16-18)
- Treasures in Heaven (v.19-21)
- The Lamp of the Body (v.22-24)
- Do Not Worry (v.25-34)

Matthew - Chapter 7

- Judging Others (v.1-6)
- Ask, Seek, Knock & 'Golden Rule' (v.7-12)
- The Narrow Gate (v. 13-14)
- A tree and its Fruit (v.15-23)
- The House on the Rock (v.24-27)
- The Authority of Jesus (v.28-29)

The Main Parts and Their Meaning of The Sermon On The Mount
(a):

These are the blessings of Christians living as citizens of Christ’s kingdom.
(Matthew 5:3-12)

How Christians can impact the world through their actions.
(Matthew 5:13-15)

Going into the richer meaning of God’s law.
(Matthew 5:17-48)

The true intentions for giving, praying and fasting.
(Matthew 6:1-18)

Christians serving God and His kingdom with sincere hearts are freed from anxiety over less important things.
(Matthew 6:19-34)

We are never to judge others.
(Matthew 7:1-6)

Prayer is a privilege and brings blessings.
(Matthew 7:7-12)

Following the narrow way (that is Jesus) is best, because the broad way leads to death.
(Matthew 7:13-14)

How to recognize people by their fruits.
(Matthew 7:15-20)

It is always better to obey God and not just talk about it.
(Matthew 7:21-29)

(a) Adapted from *Nelson's Complete Book Of Bible Maps And Charts*, 3rd ed. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010., p.307.

Amen.

Please visit our website:

https://biblebasedchristcentered.wordpress.com

May God bless you and keep you.

Pastor John

Amen.